

In the specification

The specification is amended on page 5 to correct equation 1 at line 20. The specification is amended on page 6 as agreed in a telephone interview for this application on November 6, 2003. The specification was amended on page 1 to provide U.S. Patent Numbers for the previously referenced numbers. Substitute pages 1, 5 and 6 are provided herewith, along with versions of these pages with the changes marked.

REMARKS

The Examiner bases his rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) in part on Kimball and Marzetta, US Pat. No. 4,591,691 (the '691 Patent). Applicants believe this reference has been misapprehended with respect to the present invention. The '691 Patent teaches a method that limits peaks to particular time-slowness band definitions (classifies) prior to deriving logs (tracking) based on these classified peaks. The present application claims a method of determining sonic slowness of a formation traversed by a borehole comprising generating tracks from sonic waveform peaks received at a plurality of depths, wherein the waveform peaks are not classified prior to tracking. As such, the '691 Patent does not disclosed each and every element of the present invention as claimed.

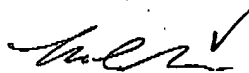
Independent claim 1 and dependent claims 2 to 12 and 15 to 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the '691 Patent. Applicant respectfully traverse these rejections. The '691 Patent teaches a method of determining sonic slowness based on classified peaks: it does not teach the method of claim 1 of the present application and its dependents wherein waveform peaks are not classified prior to tracking.

The Examiner rejected claims 13, 14, 19 to 22, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over '691 Patent in view of '560 Patent. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. The '691 Patent teaches a method that involves producing sonic logs on the basis of selected parameters of coherence peaks (see claim 1, as well as peak mask 53 and

permissible band 49 on Fig. 4). Kimball, US 6,449,560 (the "560 Patent") describes the shortcomings in windowing sonic waveforms using peak mask or maps, such as the method described in the '691 Patent. Rather than using such a windowing technique, the present invention comprises a method of determining sonic slowness by generating tracks from sonic waveform peaks received at a plurality of depths wherein the peaks are not classified prior to tracking. Thus a combination of the '691 Patent and '560 Patent as suggested by the Examiner does not teach or suggest the elements of claims 13, 14, 19 to 22 and 24 of the present application.

Applicants believe this reply is fully responsive to every issue raised by the Examiner in the Office Action dated June 13, 2003 and as discussed in the telephone interview of November 6, 2003. If this belief is incorrect or other issues arise, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at 281-285-4791 for prompt resolution of any outstanding matter. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the amount necessary to cover the any fee that may be due or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 50-1122.

Sincerely,



Robin Nava
Registration No. 42,926

Date: 12-NOV-2003
Schlumberger K.K.
2-2-1 Fuchinobe
Sagamihara-shi, Kanagawa-ken
229-0006 Japan

81-42-759-5202
81-42-759-5398(fax)
281-285-4791 (US number)
Rnava@SLB.com

Marked-Up Version**GLOBAL CLASSIFICATION OF SONIC LOGS****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

5 This application is related to co-owned U.S. Patents Numbers 4,809,236, 5,661,696, 5,594,706; 5,587,966; and 5,278,805, and U.S. patent application numbers 09/591,405- , now U.S. Pat. 6,625,541;- - and 09/678,454; - -now U.S. Pat. 6,459,993,- - and PCT/IB00/00353, the complete disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

10 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

This invention relates to sonic well logging used in the hydrocarbon well exploration. More particularly, the invention relates to methods for processing sonic well log waveforms.

Sonic logging of wells is well known in hydrocarbon exploration. Sonic well logs are
15 generated using sonic tools typically suspended in a mud-filled borehole by a cable. The sonic logging tool typically includes a sonic source (transmitter), and a plurality of receivers (receiver array) that are spaced apart by several inches or feet. It is noted that a sonic logging tool may include a plurality of transmitters and that sonic logging tools may be operated using a single
20 transmitter (monopole mode), dual transmitters (dipole mode) or a plurality of transmitters (multipole mode). A sonic signal is transmitted from the sonic source and detected at the receivers with measurements made every few inches as the tool is drawn up the borehole. The sonic signal from the transmitter enters the formation adjacent to the borehole and part of the sonic signal propagates in the borehole.

Sonic waves can travel through formations around the borehole in essentially two forms:
25 body waves and surface waves. There are two types of body waves that travel in formation: compressional and shear. Compressional waves, or P-waves, are waves of compression and expansion and are created when a formation is sharply compressed. With compressional waves, small particle vibrations occur in the same direction the wave is traveling. Shear waves, or S-waves are waves of shearing action as would occur when a body is struck from the side. In this
30 case, rock particle motion is perpendicular to the direction of wave propagation.

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processing model waveforms with the STC techniques and comparing the measured slowness with the formation shear slowness of the model.

A second technique to provide slowness logging which accounts for dispersion is known as Dispersive Slowness Time Coherence (DSTC) processing or Quick DSTC (QDSTC) and presented in US 5,278,805, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference. DSTC processing broadly comprises back-propagating detected dispersive waveforms in the Fourier domain while accounting for dispersion and then stacking the processed waveforms. DSTC processing has the ability to be applied to non-dispersive waves such as monopole compressional or shear waves. Since the first step required for DSTC processing is the calculation or selection or an appropriate dispersion curve, all that is required is a dispersion curve that represents a non-dispersive wave, i.e., a flat "curve".

The first step in slowness-time coherence processing is computing semblance, a two-dimensional function of slowness and time, generally referred to as the STC slowness-time plane. The semblance is the quotient of the beamformed energy output by the array at slowness p (the "coherent energy") divided by the waveform energy in a time window of length T (the "total energy"). The semblance function is given by Equation (1) where $x_i(t)$ is the waveform recorded by the i -th receiver of an M -receiver equally spaced array with inter-receiver spacing ΔZ . The array of waveforms $\{x_i(t)\}$ acquired at depth z constitutes a single frame of data.

$$20 \quad \rho(\tau, p) = \frac{\int_{\tau-\tau/2}^{\tau+\tau/2} \sum_{k=0}^{M-1} x_i(t - k\Delta zp)^2 dt}{M \int_{\tau-\tau/2}^{\tau+\tau/2} \sum_{k=0}^{M-1} x_i(t - k\Delta zp)^2 dt} \quad \rho(\tau, p) = \frac{\int_{\tau}^{\tau+T} \left[\sum_{i=0}^{M-1} x_i(t + i\Delta zp) \right]^2 dt}{M \int_{\tau}^{\tau+T} \sum_{i=0}^{M-1} [x_i(t + i\Delta zp)]^2 dt} \quad (1)$$

The semblance $\rho(\tau, p)$ for a particular depth z is a function of time τ and slowness p .

A second step is identifying peaks corresponding to high coherence on the slowness-time plane. Peaks are identified by sweeping the plane with a peak mask. The peak mask is a parallelogram having a slope that corresponds to the transmitter-receiver spacing. A peak is defined as a maximum within the mask region. For each peak, five variables are recorded: the

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slowness coordinate p , the time coordinate t , the semblance $\rho(t,p)$, the coherent energy (the numerator of Equation 1), and the total energy (the denominator of Equation 1).

Peaks in coherence values signify coherent arrivals in the waveforms. For each depth, a contour plot of coherence as a function of slowness and time, referred to the slowness-time plane, can be made. Classification occurs when the slowness and arrival time at each coherence peak are compared with the propagation characteristics expected of the arrivals being sought and the ones that best agree with these characteristics are retained. - Classification involves identifying time-slowness peaks as a particular waveform arrival. - Classifying the arrivals in this manner produces a continuous log of slowness versus depth.

- A "track" is defined by a sequence of measurements over depth and "tracking" involved associating measurements made at one depth with measurements made at other depths. - Typically in prior art methods the slowness and arrival time at each coherence peak are compared with the propagation characteristics of the expected arrivals and classified as to type of arrival and "labeled" or "tracked" as corresponding to compressional (P-wave), shear (S-wave) or Stoneley waveform arrivals. Thus classified, the arrivals produce a continuous log of slowness versus depth, referred to as a "track", a sequence of measurements composed of peaks identified as belonging to the same arrival as shown in FIG. 2. Referring to FIG. 2, peak 20 is classified as a compressional arrival and peak 22 is classified as a shear arrival and the classified peaks are joined to other arrivals of the same waveform in a slowness versus depth log. In prior art methods, the tracking composed two distinct steps 1) joining the peaks corresponding to the same waveform arrival in the track-search step to compose a "track", and 2) identifying the tracks by a name through classification of the tracks. In these methods, individual peaks required classification independent of the tracks.

Correct tracking of the peaks is a difficult process for a number of reasons. Some of the peaks may correspond to spatial aliases rather than the arrival of real waveforms. Some of the peaks may actually be two peaks close together. In general, a shortcoming with prior art methods for tracking is that small changes in sonic waveform data can cause large differences in the final classification.

In a classification method referred to as local classification and described in US Patent Application No. 09/591,405 (hereinafter '405), the peaks are classified by referring to only two levels, the current level and the previous level. This local classification of peaks of the tracks is independent of other non-adjacent peaks. Such a classification, because of the limits of the Bayesian algorithm used, does not classify the whole track but just the adjacent peaks of the